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Advancement of women

Letter dated 26 September 2003 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour, on behalf of the women Ministers for Foreign Affairs of various States Members of the United Nations, to draw your attention to the annexed letter concerning the importance of the item "Women and migration", which we discussed at our annual meeting during the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter to be circulated as a United Nations document during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) María Eugenia **Brizuela de Ávila**
Minister for Foreign Affairs

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Annex to the letter dated 26 September 2003 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter dated 26 September 2003 from the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Estonia, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malawi, the Niger, Paraguay, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Switzerland and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

[Original: English and Spanish]

We have the honour of addressing Your Excellency, as Women Ministers of Foreign Affairs from different Member States of the United Nations. We are committed to promote the well-being and the rights of women at both the national and international level. To this end, we have met during the 58th session of the United Nations General Assembly to discuss the issue of "Women and Migration" which we consider to be topical and of special interest.

As Your Excellency is aware, migration is a complex phenomenon affecting countries of origin, transit and destination. It calls for concerted international policies that would address the political, economic, legal, social, cultural, human rights and humanitarian as well as gender aspects. The importance of managing orderly migration and combating irregular migration resulting in the exploitation and abuse of women has to be emphasized by raising public awareness at the international level.

During the past decades, the number of migrant women has increased steadily, enabling those women in some cases to gain personal experience and economic independence and allowing them to contribute to the subsistence of their families in their country of origin.

However, migrant women are often confronted with serious threats to their physical and moral integrity or even their lives, especially in circumstances of irregular migration. Irregular migration may expose women to falling pray to traffickers, entailing sexual exploitation, social slavery such as subjugation, discrimination and isolation in countries of origin, transit and destiny.

In addition, we attribute utmost importance to effectively and efficiently combating trafficking in women and children and to address it as a major manifestation of gender inequality in the current era of globalization. We are seriously concerned about the increasing number of women and children trafficked like commodities for sexual, domestic and labour exploitation as underlined in your note to the twelfth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and in accordance with your report, Mr. Secretary-General, on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

We consider it essential for the United Nations, to continue to promote a gender-sensitive debate on migration and trafficking and to take the necessary actions to address specific aspects of women migration in general and trafficking in women in particular. Such actions should aim at reducing vulnerability to migratory risks, and at the same time at facilitating social integration of migrant women into the country of destination. In order to strengthen efforts to combat trafficking and protect migrant women, we should all strive to intensify cooperation within the

United Nations system, with relevant regional organizations and with other relevant actors in the field.

In consequence, we would like to invite all Member States to continue to address the issue of women and migration, including a gender perspective in this debate, as well as to take all necessary actions to ensure we remain seized with this matter during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

H.E. Mrs. Benita Ferrero Waldner
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria

H.E. Mrs. Billie Miller
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Barbados

H.E. Mrs. Soledad Alvear Valenzuela
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile

H.E. Mrs. Carolina Barco Isakson
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia

H.E. Mrs. María de Fátima Lima Veiga
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cape Verde

H.E. Ms. Kristiina Ojuland
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

H.E. Mrs. María Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila
Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador

H.E. Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan

H.E. Ms. Sandra Kalniete
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia

H.E. Mrs. Lydie Polfer
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg

H.E. Mrs. Lilian Patel
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malawi

H.E. Mrs. Aïchatou Mindaoudou
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Niger

H.E. Mrs. Leila Rachid de Cowles
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay

H.E. Dr. Nkosazana C. Diamini Zuma
Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa

H.E. Mrs. Ana Palacio
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain

H.E. Mrs. Maria Levens
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Suriname

H.E. Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland

H.E. Mrs. Ilinka Mitreva
Minister of Foreign Affairs of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia